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THE CLAIMS OF THE AGE ON THE WORK OF THE EVANGELIST.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION

15547 OF

MR. JOHN SULLIVAN DWIGHT,

AS PASTOR OF THE

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN NORTHAMPTON,

MAY 20, 1840.

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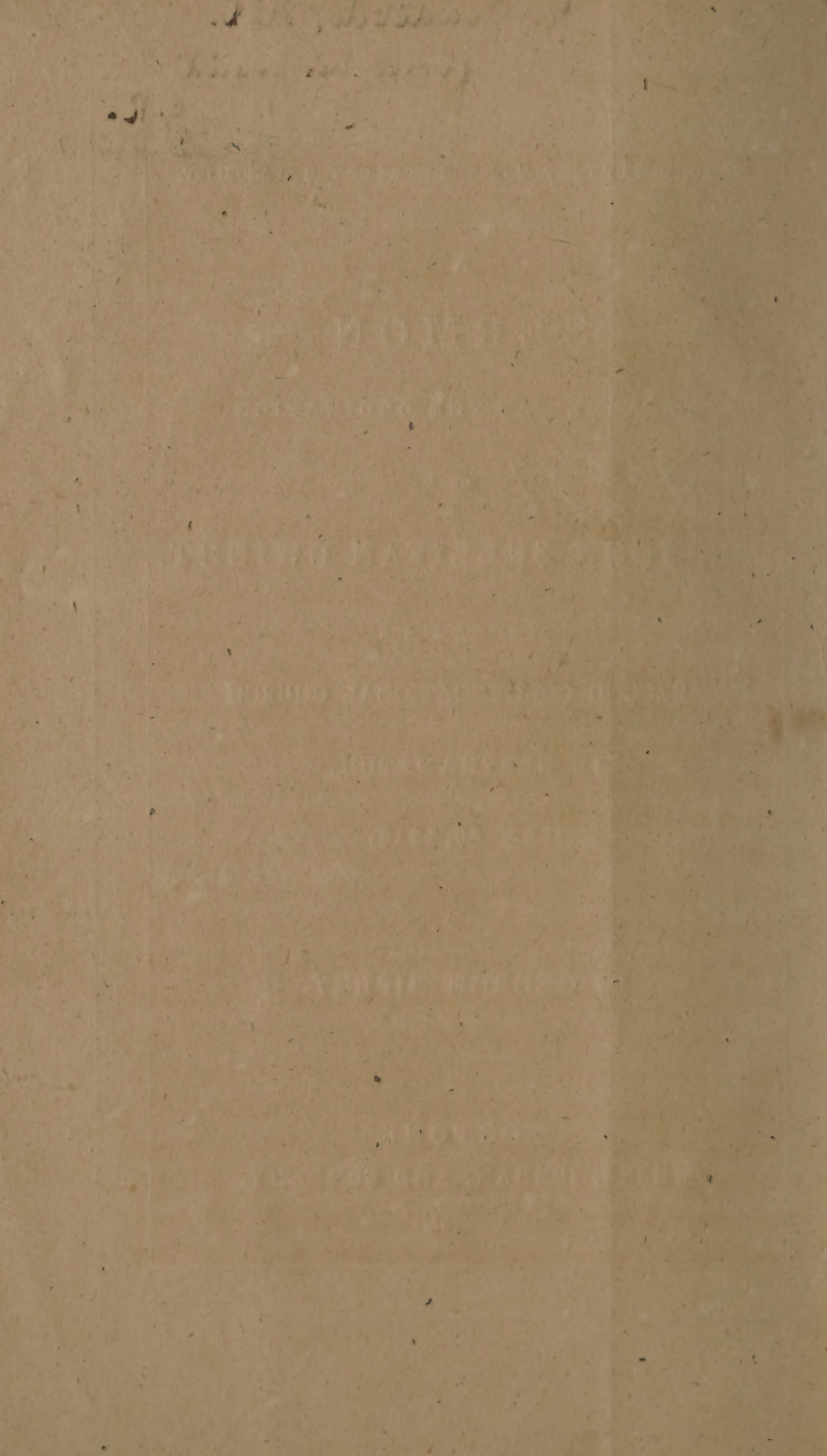
BY GEORGE RIPLEY.

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Same as 15547



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SERMON.

2 TIMOTHY, IV. 5.

DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST.

THE work of an Evangelist is to preach the Gospel of Christ. He is set apart from the common pur-suits of men, to explain and enforce the ideas which give dignity to every pursuit, which nourish the higher life of the soul under the pressure of every-day cares, which transform the world from a market of sor-did competition and grasping selfishness, to a scene of noble endeavor and disinterested love, and which thus vivify and strengthen the elements of character that raise man to communion with God, and connect him with eternity. The great object of his calling is not so much speculation as exposition; he is not so much bent on the discovery of new truth, as on the illustra-tion of old; the materials for his teachings are not to be sought from afar, but are already present in the revela-tions of Jesus; he is not commissioned to change or to controvert the opinions of a Christian community, but to point out the significance and profoundness of those opinions, to separate their essence from their

form, to redeem them from the perversions to which they have been subjected, to exhibit them in their true point of view, to present them in their relation to the culture of the soul and the improvement of society, and, in this manner, to help his fellow Christians to understand and apply the religion which they profess.

In all ages, men have been hoping for a better state of things; a noble discontent with the present has inspired the prophecy of a brighter future; this prophecy contains within itself the pledge of its fulfilment; what we long for in youth, is granted in old age; and this we believe to be no less true of society, than of the individual. But a variety of means have been devised for the accomplishment of this purpose; some have rested their hopes on improved systems of legislation; others, on the advancement of science; some have expected the introduction of a millennium of prosperity from the general diffusion of knowledge, and others from the development of material resources and the perfection of machinery. The Christian, on the other hand, who comprehends his religion, to whom its spirit is not concealed by its letter, whose faith has not been taken on trust, nor assumed for effect, but is enlightened and sincere, looks to the cross of Christ for the salvation of the world. The idea which was realized in the life of Jesus, must be also realized in the institutions of men, before the kingdom of God can be established on earth. The spiritual presence of Christ is the remedy for sin; men must be purified from transgression by the influence of divine

truth ; they must obtain a moral oneness with the Universal Father, before they can live in the cheerful fraternity of brethren ; they must be baptized in the spirit of purity and love, before an abode in heavenly places can be built up amidst the discord and confusion of the dwellings on earth.

In the hope of this consummation, which prophets have foretold, which the soul of man has longed for from the beginning, a new Evangelist to-day commences his stated labors in the Gospel of Christ. He is now consecrated not for a vague and indefinite work, but to give full effect, within the sphere of his ministry, to the idea with which Jesus was inspired ; he is not to utter an uncertain sound on the trumpet, but to proclaim distinctly, what his Master proclaimed, at the well-side in Samaria, that the hour has come for the true worshippers to worship the Father in spirit and truth ; he is not to fight as one that beateth the air, but with the weapons of Christ to attack the strong holds of sin.

This is the great purpose of the ministry of the Gospel. This has been its professed object in every period of the church ; but how inadequately it has been fulfilled, let history declare ; let the present state of religion and morality in the Christian world, as we courteously term it, bear testimony. Indeed, the institution of the ministry has fallen so far short of its design ; so few effects, comparatively, are produced by its operations ; it has proved so impotent in penetrating society with the spirit of Jesus ; so many obstructions and shackles impede its vigorous action ;

that many thoughtful persons incline to the opinion, that it has fallen into irrecoverable decrepitude, that its day has wholly gone by, and that with the advance of civilization, with the unfolding of freer and nobler religious ideas, it must give place to other forms of instruction more in harmony with the character of the age, and the independent strivings of the human spirit.

It is certain, that the aspect of the Christian ministry has greatly changed, even within the remembrance of the younger portion of this audience: its relations with society are less distinctly defined than formerly; it is deprived of the predominant and almost exclusive influence which it once enjoyed; other powerful means of social action have sprung up by its side, and in some degree, thrown it into the shade, the freedom of opinion is not so much fettered by its authority; its incumbents are not permitted to claim a monopoly of truth, nor their decisions regarded as oracles, and their connection with the people of their charge, which was once deemed almost a freehold for life, is now among the most contingent of all contingent events.

Nor has the ministry succeeded in producing any thing like a uniformity of opinion on religious subjects. This has always been a favorite purpose with the professed teachers of divine truth; they have taken their own views of revelation as the standard of infallibility; they have regarded their own interpretation of the Gospel as of equal authority with the Gospel itself; they have identified the systems of theology which

they found in the church, with the inspired conceptions of the mind of Christ. At a former period, — and one indeed not very remote, — the views which they cherished were generally shared by their people; men looked up to them as the authorized expounders of religion; and if there was sometimes a secret dissent from their opinions, there was little open disavowal of them. Every church held fast to its own creed, either written or understood; there were few disputes in regard to its meaning; and though the great division between those who relied on authority and those who trusted to rational conviction may always be traced; there was a pervading unanimity in each respective division; every household of faith spoke in a language which all its members recognised and understood; there was a family altar around which each one felt himself at home.

A different state of things is now experienced among all the churches of the land. The unlimited freedom of thought which happily prevails in this community, produces a general fermentation; the ancient repose is disturbed; the stagnation of the past has given place to intense mental action; the doctrines of the theologians are brought before the tribunal of the people; a struggle has taken place between the old and the new; the most rigid creeds have been unable to prevent the progress of thought; so that there is scarcely a church of any communion, in which opinion is not divided, and the foundations of ages shaken to their centre.

It is natural to suppose, that these combined influ-

ences would diminish the importance of the ministry, and by changing its character, deprive it of its authority. There are some who secretly wish, and others who fear, the realization of this event. The popular lecturer, the philosopher, the educator, it is thought by many, sustain hostile relations with the evangelist; they are supposed to take the work out of his hands; to leave him nothing to do; to make his occupation a sinecure; they must increase, while he must decrease; and the pulpit must ultimately give place to the chairs of the lyceum, the university, or the common school. But from these views I strongly dissent. I cannot recognise such an antagonism between the ministry and the prevailing tendencies of the day, as many apprehend or imagine. If the evangelist comprehends the character of his work, he will perceive that it is one which can be performed by none but himself; if it does not cover the whole ground of modern society, there is no institution which can take its place; his office may be modified, but it cannot be destroyed; he may discover new and more effective modes of discharging its duties; but the truth as it is in Jesus will still remain the instrument for the reformation of society, and the salvation of man.

Neither is there any reason to dread an unfavorable influence from the tendencies already alluded to, which are looked on by many as opposed to the ministry. It is true, that people are not content with merely the instructions of the church; they demand other teachers beside their ministers; the pulpit has ceased to be an exclusive light; religion is not the

only subject on which the mind is exercised ; and on this, men are becoming disposed to form their convictions from personal inquiry rather than from foreign dictation. I cannot but rejoice in this aspect of the present times. It seems to me an indication of great good. I welcome the public teacher, who gives the ripest fruits of his solitary studies to the mass of attentive hearers that throng the lecture room. He prepares the mind for pure religion, by enlarging the sphere of its interests, awakens habits of thought that are an essential condition of improvement from the pulpit, and averts the dangers of superstition, by the exhibition of enlightened views on other subjects. I welcome the philosopher, who shows the foundation of religion in the primitive elements of the soul, who demonstrates the grounds of our belief in divine things, who illustrates the harmony between the reason of man and the revelations of Christ, and identifies the disclosures of inspiration with the noblest instincts of humanity. He is a fellow-laborer with the Evangelist ; they afford each other, the mutual aid which is essential to both ; the services of neither can be dispensed with ; and the ministry is made not less important nor less effectual, when the truths which it proclaims are shown by science to be built upon a rock.

The work of the Evangelist, therefore, may be regarded as a real work ; the most sincere and living men may wish to share in its service ; it presents a sphere for the highest qualities of the intellect and the heart ; and could it be carried on in the true

spirit of Jesus, in complete accordance with his divine idea, it would shake and agitate society, as the trees of the forest are moved by the vernal winds, before they assume the new foliage which nature prepares with every revolving season for her favorites. The work of the Evangelist, we have said, is to preach the Gospel of Christ. But the Gospel of Christ is the great antagonist principle of error and sin ; it wages a deadly warfare against every form of corruption ; the restoration of the soul to the image of God is the only object in which it can rest ; never can it be content with any thing short of this ; it moves forward with the step of fate, rather let me say, with the resistless march of divine Providence, to the regeneration of society, the complete and triumphant establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The Gospel announces the supremacy of the spirit over the arrangements of men ; “ what shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.” It asserts the hope of unlimited progress ; “ Heaven and earth shall pass away,” says Jesus, “ but my word shall not pass away ; ” “ I am the light of the world, and he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life ; ” he will not only see but live ; and he that both lives and sees will go on ; and this holds true alike of communities and of individuals. It announces the prostration of evil in the prevalence of good ; Humanity is destined to a higher condition than it has yet enjoyed ; “ I saw Satan falling like lightning from Heaven ; ” and “ I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to myself.”

The Evangelist then engages in the realization of the predictions of Jesus. He surveys the world from the cross of his Master, and, in the spirit of him who died there, resolves that, God helping, he will be true to the idea which he came to announce. He commences his work with earnest faith, yet with clear insight. While he does not distrust the power of the Gospel, he perceives that its influence has never been fully exerted on society, or on the church. He knows that the name of Christ is far more prevalent than his spirit; that his religion has been crushed beneath the inventions of men; that no sect of modern times completely embodies or comprehends his sublime conception; and that men must sit long at the feet of Jesus, before they can appreciate the simplicity of truth.

The true work of the Evangelist, at the present day, therefore, is to bring the religion of society into accordance with the religion of Christ. He has nothing to do with the perpetuation of prevalent ideas; he is not to ask how far his preaching will fall in with the tone of the times; he will scorn the enjoyment of popular favor, if it be gained at the expense of his own convictions; he will love his fellow men too well ever to flatter them with smooth words; but he takes his stand on the fact which no one can deny, that the prevailing religion of Christendom is below the standard of Christ, that no community is to be found in which the spirit of the Gospel is carried into full effect; he will therefore proclaim the truth which he sees, let it cut where it will; he will never

wish to blunt the edge of the sword of the spirit which is the word of God; and will announce the whole counsel of his Master, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Do you ask in what respects the prevalent religion of society is below the religion of Christ, I would ask, in return, in what respects it comes up to that standard? Where is the community, in which the order of society, the general tone of morality, the every-day dealings between man and man, are based on the new commandment which the Redeemer gave to his disciples? Where is the church which can justly be described as the communion of the faithful; which enjoys the fellowship of the Holy Ghost; and which is crowned with the love, and joy, and peace, which are the peculiar fruits of the Spirit? Where are the perfect men in Christ Jesus, who have attained to the fulness of the stature of the sons of God; whose conversation is in Heaven; and to whom we could apply without misgiving, the common apostolic description of the disciples of Jesus, "They are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in them." Think not, brethren, that in these remarks, I wish to condemn others and exalt ourselves. I speak not of this or that church, of this or that sect; I speak not of errors which we may see around us, and from which we are exempt; I claim no exemption for ourselves, from evils which belong to our age; I speak of the prevailing religion of society in this the nineteenth century from Him, whose garments' hem we scarce seem as yet to have touched; and surely not with the

feeling of reproach or scorn, but in deepest grief, do I confess, that we are all under the same condemnation; that calling ourselves Christians, we have yet failed to embody the idea of Jesus in our personal characters or our social institutions. We seem to have departed from Christ in the lapse of ages; we idolize our profession of the Gospel, while we poorly comprehend its spirit; and were the Master whose name we bear, to appear in the midst of us to-day, I should tremble for his reception; the Son of Man, should he come, would he find faith on the earth; or would he not rather be, like a root out of dry ground; without form or comeliness and no beauty in him that we should desire him. When he departed from his friends, he told them, that he should not leave them alone; he promised to be present in the spirit of truth; the influence of the Divine Comforter was the common legacy of the church; "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world;" and "Because I live, ye shall live also." Brethren, do we witness the fulfilment of this promise? Do we believe in its reality? Have we any hope of its blessings in our personal experience? Do we look for the presence of Christ, the visible influence of that spirit which filled and fired his soul, in our institutions, in our churches, in society? We delight to call ourselves by that name which is above every name. We are lavish in our cries of Lord, Lord, to him, who was once despised and rejected of men. Our whole land is covered with temples erected for his honor. Every Sabbath the music of the christian bells summons our thronging population to the house of

God ; they come from every valley and every hill-top to celebrate him who brought glad tidings ; the solemn anthem rises in his praise ; holy men utter words of supplication in his name ; his sayings are repeated as though they possessed a talismanic power to expel all evil ; but is Christ present there ? Does his spirit yet speak in his churches ? Do we behold his divine image in the faces of his disciples ? Are they one with him, as he was one with God ? Do they display a lofty hope, like that which irradiated the hour of crucifixion ; a generous love, which acknowledges no limits but those of Humanity ; a sublime trust in God, which casts out every unworthy fear ; and a cheerful earnestness in the discharge of duty, which finds encouragement even in the song of birds and the bloom of spring ? If we cannot give the answer which we would to such inquiries, then has the Evangelist a work to perform, which is not likely to be soon completed ; he is to enthrone Christ in the hearts of his disciples, and penetrate the church with the influence of his truth.

Christ announced the preëminence of spiritual worship over the observance of forms. He utterly repudiated the idea that any prescribed ceremony was essential to sincere homage ; Jerusalem and Gerizim, in his view, were alike indifferent ; he attached no importance to the gold on the altar, to the fringe on the garment ; the spirit, in which the gift was brought, the purity of heart which consecrated it, were the essential conditions ; the time and the place of prayer were nothing compared with the trust and love from which

it flowed ; many words were not required for its due performance ; the “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” of the publican, was of more value in the sight of heaven, than the thrice-repeated “ God I thank thee that I am not as other men are,” of the self-complacent Pharisee.

This feature of the religion of Christ is opposed to a prominent feature in the religion of society. There are too many who make a regular observance of religious forms a substitute for the spirit of religion ; they confound the means with the end ; they attach a saving virtue to rites whose sole value consists in their spiritual influence ; and measure the amount of their piety by the length of their prayers, the frequency with which they are offered, or the form and the place in which they are presented. We become attached to certain words, as if they possessed an inherent efficacy ; our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and we would fain remain on it forever ; we gather round the mossy well-side, from which they were wont to draw, and can scarce believe that other fountains also contain the waters of life ; we think of the ancient Jacob, who drank thereof himself, with his children, and his cattle ; and forget that greater one than Jacob, or than Moses, or than all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, who stood and cried, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ; and the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”

Again, Jesus asserted the supremacy of holiness in

comparison with speculative belief. He never prescribes a definite creed, the reception of which is essential to discipleship ; he makes the affections the primary seat of religion, not the understanding ; and in all his teachings, throws no light on the questions which exercise philosophers ; but simply announces the necessity of holiness to the salvation of the soul. According to Jesus, religion is the possession of inward life, not the belief of an abstract doctrine ; when he speaks of faith, it is the faith of devout trust, not of curious research ; the faith which confides in the omnipotence of truth, not that which relies on systems of speculation. He is silent on those perplexing topics which have divided opinion in all ages of the world ; he attacks the prevalence of evil, but does not attempt to explain its origin ; he declares the universal Providence of a benignant Father, but does not help us to comprehend the mystery of his attributes ; he confirms the instinctive hope of all souls, that death is not the destruction of life, but does not enable the eye to see, nor the heart of man to imagine the precise condition of our future existence ; his instructions are confined to points of greater moment ; relating more directly to the present wants of man ; to the universal interests of the race, not to the speculative curiosity of the few ; and adapted to inspire the soul with the love of righteousness, rather than to train the intellect to accuracy of opinion. According to Jesus, he is accepted of God, who worships the Father in the beauty of holiness ; goodness is the most appropriate homage to the Infinite Spirit of goodness ; and he who loves his Maker with all his heart,

and his neighbor as himself, has already entered into the kingdom of heaven.

This fact in the religion of Christ is opposed to the spirit of exclusiveness, in matters of speculative belief, which prevails to a greater or less extent, in all the churches of Christendom. We have not yet learned to bear with patience the honest differences of opinion, which must ever spring up among children of the same family, and disciples of the same Lord. Uniformity of faith is still desired as the condition of communion; we judge men by their speculations, not by their lives; and are reluctant to acknowledge the claims of a brother to the household of faith, if he express his allegiance to Christ in a language at variance with our own. The purity of a church is estimated by the fidelity of its adherence to fixed doctrinal standards; the words of men are elevated to a higher rank than the spirit of Christ; the beautiful arrangement of the Christian graces presented by the apostle is reversed; while we say, that now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the least of these is charity. In this respect, the modern church exhibits a mournful contrast with the primitive model. In the days of the Apostles, no creed embodied abstract conceptions which all must receive; the Greek and the Jew brought the diverse ideas which a different culture had given them, into the common fellowship of the faithful; each enjoyed his private opinions undisturbed; no one was called to account by his neighbor, for his peculiar construction of the truth which they held together; one aspect of Christianity is exhibited by John and

another by Matthew, but they do not exclude each other ; and though it is true that divisions began to creep in to the disorderly church at Corinth, while one declared that he was of Paul, and another, that he was of Apollos, the spirit of sectarianism was promptly rebuked by the catholic Apostle ; he would not hear to the suggestion that Christ was divided, and boldly insisted, that though there was a diversity of operations, the universal working was of God.

The restoration of the church to the original platform, will be a prominent endeavor of the Evangelist who comprehends his calling. Liberty, Holiness, Love, will be the motto under which he works. He will strive to preserve a unity of spirit, in the bond of peace ; his ideal of a Christian community, will be a band of brothers emancipated by submission to Christ from all external authority ; claiming no more dominion over the faith of each other, than did the Apostle over that of his proselytes ; united in allegiance to Christ, disclaiming all allegiance to man ; maintaining the freedom of the sons of God, and refusing to be brought into subjection for a moment.

Again, Jesus asserted the necessity of personal religious experience. His teachings always imply the existence of a religious nature in man, of the continual presence of God in his works, and of the immediate relation of the human soul with the Creator. He was conscious of the intimate connection of his own spirit with the Divine Spirit ; for he dwelt as it were in the bosom of God ; he never ceased to enjoy a living in-

sight into divine things ; but a similar relation he announced as the privilege of the faithful ; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ; and the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them ; that they may all be one ; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. The establishment of this personal relation with God, is what we mean by personal religious experience ; and the promise of this to every sincere believer, I regard as one of the chief distinctions of Christianity. I take the language of Jesus in its literal sense. I dare not explain it away into Jewish metaphor or oriental hyperbole. I think he meant to assert a plain matter of fact, when he declared that the spirit which dwelt in him should be given to those that believe on his name ; that they also should perceive religious truth for themselves ; that they should be conscious of the love of the Father, and rejoice in the freedom of the sons of God ; that the anointing of the Holy Ghost would teach them, so that they should see with their own eyes, and live by a faith which needed no external authority as a prop.

The reality of personal experience, in the depth and extent with which it was set forth by Christ, is far from being admitted by the Christian church. The present tendency of thought is to keep it in the back ground, if not to reject it totally. We are inclined to substitute a blind reliance on tradition, for a clear insight into divine truth ; to confound the passive reception of ideas on foreign authority with their vital appropriation from personal experience ; and in our

zeal for the supremacy of the Father, or the divinity of the Son, not to know so much as whether there be any Holy Ghost. This doctrine, it is true, has not failed to receive a cordial testimony, from believers in the church in every age. Its reality was maintained by Luther, in his conflicts with the hierarchy. Fene- lon was condemned by the Pope for accepting its consequences ; Sir Henry Vane, rejoiced on the scaffold in its glorious light ; it opened a new world of revelation to Barclay and George Fox ; it was the grand argument of Roger Williams, for the freedom of the soul ; and in words that can never die, and which redeem from unmingled aversion the errors of a great man, it was nobly set forth by the former illustrious pastor of Northampton, from whom yonder church takes its name, and whom posterity will continue to revere as one of “ the clearest and richest minds that ever ripened in New England.”

Still, the religion now most prevalent in society, is of a different stamp. It makes less account of experience than of authority, strives to submit the soul to a foreign yoke, robs the believer of his independence as a freeman of the Lord, reduces the light of revelation to the erudition of the pedant, and changes the character of Christianity from the law of spiritual life, to the letter of the statute-book, and a system of dogmatical formulas. Let the Evangelist then proclaim the dispensation of the spirit. Let him cling to the promise with earnest faith, “ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh ; and they shall no more teach every one his bro-

ther; for all shall be taught of God." Let him exhibit Christianity as the pledge of the blessed Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who will abide forever with the faithful; he will thus commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; many hearts will bear witness to his word; and the truths which he announces, will be sustained not by the wisdom of men, but by the demonstration of the spirit, and power from on high.

Once more, Christ announced the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. He wished to establish the divine laws in the institutions of men. By the kingdom of heaven, he represents a state of society in which human passions should be subject to celestial wisdom; in which natural order should prevail; and the principles of eternal justice bear rule over selfish policy. He claimed to fulfil the prophecies which foretold the Messiah. But the reign of the Messiah, according to the Hebrew prediction, was to consist in the prevalence of righteousness in human institutions. A purer and more happy state of society was to be realized on earth. The dominion of force was to give way to the influence of love. The cheerful worship of the Creator was to banish the abject service of superstition. Nations were to exchange the weapons of war for the utensils of industry; violence was no more to be heard in the land, nor complaining in the streets; man would cease to lift up his hand against his brother; the people were to dwell in safety; each would eat of the fruit of his own vine and fig-

tree ; oppressions would cease ; slavery would be destroyed ; ambition would have no sphere ; mutual love would crown every dwelling ; sorrow and sighing would flee away ; Jerusalem would become gladness, and Judah a joy ; the knowledge of the Lord would cover the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea ; and all flesh would see it, and rejoice together.

In view of these sublime hopes, Jesus announced that the kingdom of God was at hand. Conscious of the fulness of Divinity which possessed his spirit, he declared "I am the light of the world." He distinctly foretold, that the faith of ages would yet be realized ; that the inspired visions of the ancient seers were no delusion ; that a better futurity was in reserve for the race ; and that human society would carry into effect the laws of God, would be converted from the disorder of centuries, into the harmony and joy of the kingdom of Heaven.

The realization of these predictions is entrusted to the fidelity of the Church. This is the primary object of its establishment. It can have no true life when it loses sight of this end. "Thy kingdom come," should be its unceasing prayer. And when the Church shall engage in the fulfilment of this mission, when the spirit of wisdom, of justice, and of a fervent love of souls shall be poured out upon it from on high, when the whole body of the faithful shall be inspired with the presence of Jesus, the work of the Evangelist will, to some degree, be accomplished ; the great promise of God to man will be fulfilled ; and the aged Simeons, who now wait in the temple for the dawning

of a brighter day, may bow their hoary heads in peace, for their eyes will have seen the salvation of the Lord.

The prevalence of the spirit of Christ in the institutions of men is the hope of the world. On this depends the redemption of humanity. Every believing heart looks forward to the coming of a better day ; it accepts the promise that Jesus shall reign till he has put all enemies under his feet ; but, in our anticipations of the future, let us strive to comprehend the teachings of our Master. When the millennium dawns upon the earth, it will not be ushered in by the thunders of Sinai ; no trump of archangel will proclaim it ; no blazing universe will be the sign of its approach ; it will not be announced by the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the elements melting with fervent heat ; but soft and gentle, as the descent of the Dove on the Saviour at his baptism in the wilderness, will it appear in the heart of man ; like the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband, it will be borne to the world on the wings of love ; and we need not inquire into the day or the hour of its advent, which no man knoweth, or can know, — nor the angels in heaven, nor the Son, — nor any but the Father, who has placed the times and seasons in his own power ; but we shall know that it is here, even at the door, as soon as the kingdom of God is within our souls, and there is peace on earth and good will among men. This is the great consummation for which all good spirits long. Then will the sign of the Son of Man be seen not in the heavens,

but on the earth ; it will be displayed in every human face ; strong and gentle voices will declare it ; the universal heart will beat under its presence ; the abodes of men will be the dwelling-place of God ; and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I have thus spoken of some of the aspects in which the work of the Evangelist presents itself to our regard at the present day. The accomplishment of this work depends no less on the spirit of the people than on his own fidelity. Let them receive their pastors rather in the relation of prophets than of priests ; expecting from them the delivery of truth rather than the performance of a pageant ; and accepting the faithful rebuke of their sins, instead of demanding of them to prophesy smooth things and to utter deceits. In these days, the minister must speak out his earnest convictions, or he had better be dumb ; polished conventionalisms are worn out ; and dainty phrases no longer satisfy the craving hunger of the soul. If he thinks that he must color his own views to suit the popular taste ; that he must exhibit truth, not as it appears to his own mind, but as it is supposed to appear to other minds ; he at once sacrifices the sincerity and independence of a man ; he becomes a time-server and a slave ; and of all slaves, a slave in the pulpit is the most to be pitied. A wise people will never allow this. A few individuals may now and then demand it ; but in the long run, it will never meet the approval of the people of New England. They require the honest utterance of opinion in their public teachers ; they will not be put off with words

that have lost their meaning, instead of the living expression of divine truth ; and he who acts most powerfully on their minds by the force of ideas, who arouses them from the slumber of inveterate habit, who proclaims the dawning of a better day, and who shows in every tone and look, that he is in earnest with their soul, will be their chosen guide. He will engage in the work of an Evangelist for their benefit, and they will encourage him in its performance.

CHARGE

BY

REV. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

The ecclesiastical council, assembled here to introduce you to the office of a christian minister, according to the simple and affecting rites of the Congregational churches, have appointed me to deliver the Charge; or, in other words, to expound to you and to enforce the duties of the sacred office. In doing this, I claim no right to dictate to your faith, I ask no passive obedience or assent; and yet there is an authority in Divine Truth, and in proportion as a man is possessed by it, he cannot but speak with the energy of a divine messenger, and with the consciousness of a right to respectful attention.

I shall confine myself to your duties as a public teacher of religion; not that the more private labors of your office want importance; but because it will be more useful to enter with some thoroughness into a part, than to give superficial notices of the whole, of your functions.

It is well to start with some comprehensive view of our work, be it what it may; and I therefore begin with observing, that the great idea which ought to shine out in all preaching, is that of Moral Perfection. This is the very essence of God; our highest conception of the Divinity being

that of absolute, unbounded, eternal, omnipotent rectitude and love. Of this perfection, Christ is the bright, unsullied image. To bring men to this, was the grand purpose of his coming, teaching, miracles, and cross. In this, we have the explanation of our present being, the end of all its duties, temptations, conflicts, and pains. This is in truth the everlasting life, the heaven, which he came to unfold and promise to mankind. Your fitness for your office is to be measured by your comprehension of this perfection, by your faith in it, by your aspirations after it, by the power with which this supreme beauty smites and stirs your soul, and by your power of awakening the thought and desire of it in the souls of others. Your work then is to preach the Perfect. Preach the perfection of God, that He may be loved, not with passion or selfish regards, but with enlightened, disinterested, ever-growing love. Preach the perfection of Christ. Strive to seize the true idea of his character, to penetrate the mists with which the errors of ages have shrouded him, to see him in his simple majesty, to trace in his history the workings of his soul, the peculiarity of his love, the grandeur of his purpose. Be not anxious to settle his rank in the universe, but to comprehend the divinity of his spirit, that you may awaken towards him generous, purifying affections. Preach the perfection to which man is called by Christianity. Preach the nobleness and beauty of human virtue. Believe in man as destined to make progress without end. Help him to understand his high calling as a Christian, and to see God working within and around him for his perfection. These views might easily be extended, but these are sufficient to show you the grandeur of thought which belongs to your profession. Moral perfection is its beginning and end. How sublime and awakening the theme of the ministry! And yet religion, in consequence of its being so familiar, and of its having been cramped so long in human creeds, shrinks

in most minds into a small compass, and wears any form but that of grandeur. You have seen in schools the solar system, with its majestic worlds, represented by circles of wire and balls of pith. In like manner, religion is dwarfed and degraded. Strive to think of it nobly, justly, vividly, and hold it forth as the sublimest reality.

You are to preach the perfect; and for what end? Not simply that men may discern and admire it. This is but the beginning of your work. The great aim must be to stir up men to the solemn, stern, invincible purpose of doing, of becoming, what they acknowledge and admire, of realizing their conceptions of the right, the perfect, the divine. The highest office of the ministry, is to breathe this energy, this indomitable force of will. It is not enough to awaken enthusiasm by touching manifestations of moral beauty, of Christian greatness of soul. Sensibility without moral resolution, avails nothing. All duties, and especially the highest, are resisted in the breasts of our hearers, by strong temptations, by the senses, the passions, by selfish hopes and fears, by bad habits and sins; and unless you can awaken energy to put down this resistance, you preach in vain. It is the existence of this mighty antagonist force to virtue in human nature, which makes Christianity necessary, which makes the ministry necessary. The grand purpose of all the doctrines, teachings, promises, institutions, and spiritual aids of our religion, is to infuse an all-conquering will in opposition to temptation, to bind the soul to the choice and pursuit of perfection, in the face of pleasure, pain, honor, interest, loss and death. Propose distinctly to yourself as your grand work, the excitement of this energy of the will; and this single thought will do much to give a living power to your preaching.

Having spoken of the end of the Christian teacher, I proceed to consider the means by which it is to be accomplished. His great instrument is the Truth revealed by God

through Jesus Christ, and through his own soul. To gain this must of course be the labor of his life; and he is to gain it chiefly by Study and by Inward Experience. A minister must be a student; a patient, laborious student. There are those, indeed, who seem to think, that religious truth comes by inspiration; and it is certain, that light often flashes on the mind as from heaven. But inspiration does not visit the idle, passive mind. We receive it in the use and faithful use of our powers. You must study, you must work. Your parish must contain no harder laborer than yourself. To study is not to read, that we may know what others have thought; but to put forth the utmost strength of our faculties, for the acquisition of just, strong, living, convictions of truth. It is to concentrate the mind; to pierce beneath the apparent and particular, to the real and permanent and universal; to grapple with difficulties; to separate false associations and accidental adjuncts from the truth. Study human nature and the divine. Study human life, that you may penetrate through its mysteries and endless mutations to its one all-comprehending design. Study God's works, that amidst their infinite agencies you may discern the one power and spirit from which all spring. Study especially the Holy Scriptures, the records of God's successive revelations to the human race. Strive to gain profound, generous, and fruitful conceptions of Christianity; to penetrate into the import of its records; to seize its distinctive character, and to rise above what was local, temporary, partial in Christ's teaching, to his universal, all-comprehending truth. To gain this knowledge of Christianity, your first and chief resort will be, of course, to the New Testament; but remember, that there are difficulties in the way of a just interpretation of this venerable record. Other books are left to act on our minds freely and without control, to exert on us their native, genuine influence; but such a

host of interpreters thrust themselves between the sacred volume and the reader, so many false associations of ideas with its phraseology are formed from the cradle, and long familiarity has so hardened us to its most quickening passages, that it is more difficult to bring ourselves into near communication with a sacred writer, than with any other. The student in theology must labor earnestly to escape the power of habit, and to receive immediate impressions from the scriptures; and when by his efforts he is able to catch the spirit which had before lain hid beneath the letter; to feel a new power in words which had often fallen lifelessly on his ear; to place himself in the midst of the past, and thus to pierce into the heart of passages, which he had been accustomed to interpret according to modern modes of thought; he ought to rejoice as in the acquisition of untold treasure, and to feel that he is arming himself with the most effectual weapons for his spiritual warfare.

You will, of course, read other books beside the Bible; but beware lest these diminish your power. Perhaps in no department of literature are works of vigorous and original thought rarer than in theology. No profession is so overwhelmed with common-place, weak, worthless books, as ours. No text has been so obscured and oppressed by undiscerning commentators, as the Bible. In theology, as in all branches of knowledge, confine yourself very much to the works of men, who have written not from tradition or imitation, but from consciousness, experience, reflection and research; and study these, that your own faculties may be roused to a kindred energy. Especially beware of giving yourself up to the popular literature of the day; which, however innocent or useful as an amusement, is the last nutriment to form a powerful mind, and which I fear is more pernicious to men of our profession than of any other.

Study laboriously, for much is to be learned. Do not

destroy your intellectual life, by imagining that all truth is discovered, and that you have nothing to do but to repeat what others have thought. I know not a more fatal mistake to a teacher. It were better for you to burn your books, and to devote yourself to solitary, painful researches after truth, than to sleep on others' acquisitions, than to make the activity of others' minds a substitute for your own. It is intended by our Creator, that truth should be our own discovery, and therefore he has surrounded us with fallible beings, whom we are impelled to distrust. Paradoxical as it may seem, we ought to discover the truths which we have been taught by others; for the light which our own earnest free thought will throw on these, will make them so different from what they were when first passively received, that they will be virtually rediscovered by ourselves.

Study laboriously, for much is to be learned. Do not feel as if Christianity had spoken its last word, and had nothing more to say. It is the characteristic of Divine Truth, that it is inexhaustible, infinitely fruitful. It does not stand alone in the mind, but combines with, explains, irradiates our other knowledge. It is the office of a great moral truth to touch the deep springs of thought within us, to awaken the soul to new activity, to start a throng of suggestions to be followed out by patient contemplation. An arid, barren religion, which reveals a precise, rigid doctrine, admitting no expansion, and kindling no new life in the intellect, cannot be from God. It wants an essential mark of having come from the Creator of the human soul, for the great distinction of the soul, is its desire to burst its limits and grow forever.

But I need not in this town urge the importance of study. Can a minister breathe the atmosphere in which Edwards lived, and content himself with taking passively what others teach? I exhort you to visit the spot where Edwards

brought forth his profound works; and let the spiritual presence of that intensest thinker of the new world and of the age in which he lived, stir you up to energy of thought. His name has shed a consecration over this place. In many things indeed you differ from him; but you will not therefore reverence the less his single-hearted and unwearied devotion of his great powers to the investigation of truth; and in the wide and continued influence of his writings, you will learn, that secret study, silent thought is after all the mightiest agent in human affairs.

I have enlarged beyond my purpose on study; I proceed to observe, that something more than the action of intellect is needed to secure to you a living knowledge of Christian truth. On moral subjects no study can avail us without Inward Experience. To comprehend religion, you must be religious. A new revelation of truth is gained, by bringing the truth to bear on our own hearts and lives. Study the best books; but remember that no "tongue of men or angels," no language of heaven or earth, can give you that intimate perception of God, that faith in the invisible, which comes from inward purity, from likeness to the Divinity. There is a light, to which others are strangers, that visits the inward eye of the man who contends with evil in himself, and is true to his convictions of duty. This is the highest inspiration, surpassing that of prophets; for the ancient prophet comprehended but imperfectly the revelation with which he was charged, and sometimes shrunk from communicating it to the world. Christian truth will never become your own, until something congenial with it is unfolded in your own soul. We learn the Divinity through a divine principle within ourselves. We learn the majesty and happiness of virtue by consciousness, by experience, by giving up all to virtue, and in no other way. Disinterested, impartial love is the perfection of the intellect as well as of the heart. Without it, thought is barren and super-

ficial, clinging to things narrow, selfish and earthly. This love gave being, unity, harmony to the universe, and is the only light in which the universe can be read. Preach from this highest inspiration, and you will preach with power. Without this inward experience, intellect, imagination, passion, rhetoric, genius may dazzle, and be rapturously praised and admired, but they cannot reach the depths of the human soul. Watch then, over your own spiritual life; be what you preach; know by consciousness what you inculcate. Remember that the best preparation for enforcing any Christian virtue, is to bring it into vigorous action in your own breast. Let the thirst for perfection grow up in you into a holy enthusiasm, and you will have taken the most effectual step towards perfecting them that hear you.

I have now spoken of the two principal means of obtaining Christian truth; they are study and inward experience. Having thus sought the truth, how shall it be communicated? A few suggestions only can be made. I exhort you, first, to communicate it with all possible plainness and simplicity. Put confidence in the power of pure, unsophisticated truth. Do not disguise or distort it, or overlay it with ornaments or false colors, to make it more effectual. Bring it out in its native shape and hues, and, if possible, in noon-day brightness. Beware of ambiguous words, of cant, of vague abstractions, of new-fangled phrases, of ingenious subtleties. Especially exaggerate nothing for effect, that most common sin of the pulpit. Be willing to disappoint your hearers, to be unimpressive, to seem cold, rather than to "o'erstep the modesty" of truth. In the long run, nothing is so strong as simplicity. Do not, to be striking, dress up truth in paradoxes. Do not make it virtually falsehood, by throwing it out without just modification and restraint. Do not destroy its fair proportions by extravagance. Undoubtedly strong emotion often breaks out in hyperboles. It cannot stop to weigh its words; and this free, bold lan-

guage of nature I do not mean to condemn; for this, even when most daring, is simple and intelligible. I would caution you not against nature, but against artificial processes, against distrust of simple truth, against straining for effect, against efforts to startle or dazzle the hearer, against the quackery which would pass off old thoughts for new, or common thoughts for more than their worth, by means of involved or ambitious phraseology. Prefer the true to the dazzling, the steady sun-light to the meteor. Truth is the power which is to conquer the world; and you cannot toil too much to give clear perceptions of it. I may seem to waste words on so plain a point; but I apprehend, that few ministers understand the importance of helping men to see religious truth distinctly. No truth, I fear, is so faintly apprehended. On the subject of religion most men walk in a mist. The words of the Bible and of the preacher convey to multitudes no definite import. Theology, being generally taught without method, and as a matter of authority, and before the mind can comprehend it, is too often the darkest and most confused of all the subjects of thought. How little distinct comprehension is carried away by multitudes from our most important discourses. My brother, help men to *see*. Christianity was called Light, and you will be its worthy teacher only by being, like its first ministers, a "light of the world." It is a common error, that to avoid dulness, the most unpardonable sin of the pulpit, the preacher can find more effectual means than the clear expression of simple truth. Accordingly, some have recourse to crude novelties; some to mysticism, as if truth to be imposing must be enthroned in clouds; some to vehemence; some to strong utterance of feeling. Of course I would say nothing in disparagement of feeling; but I am satisfied, there is no more effectual security against dulness, than the unfolding of truth distinctly and vividly, so that the hearer can lay a strong hold on great principles, can take in a larger extent

of thought, and can feel that he has a rock for faith and opinion to rest on. In the natural world it is Light that wakes us in the morning, and keeps us awake through the day; and I believe that to bring light into God's house is one of the surest ways of driving slumber out of its walls. Let me add, that, to give at once clearness and interest to preaching, nothing is more necessary than that comprehensive wisdom, which discerns what is prominent and commanding in a subject, which seizes on its great points, its main features, and throws lesser matters into the back ground, thus securing unity and of consequence distinctness of impression. Nothing is so dull as a dead level, as monotony, as want of relief and perspective, want of light and shade; and this is among the most common causes of the dulness of the pulpit.

The remarks, made under the present head, are liable to a misapprehension, which may be usefully guarded against. I have condemned affected and obscure phraseology. Do not imagine that I would recommend to you a hackneyed style. The minister, to give distinct, vivid impression, must especially beware of running the round of common-place expressions. He must break away from the worn-out phraseology of the pulpit. He must not confine himself to terms and modes of speech which familiarity has deadened. So mighty is the influence of time and habit in emptying words of life and significance, that truth in every age needs new forms, fresh manifestations. Happy the teacher, who is able to give out truth in language original and bold, yet simple and unforced, and such as causes no offence to cultivated taste or religious feeling.

Perhaps it may be objected to the advice now given, that I have recommended a plainness and distinctness not to be attained by the preacher. It may be said, that religion relates to the Infinite; that its great object is the Incomprehensible God; that human life is surrounded with abysses

of mystery and darkness ; that the themes, on which the minister is to speak, stretch out beyond the power of imagination, and of course do not admit of mathematical preciseness of statement ; that he has aspirations and feelings too high, and deep, and vast to be accurately defined ; that at times he only catches glimpses of truth, and cannot set it forth in all its proportions. All this is true. But it is also true that a minister speaks to be understood ; and if he cannot make himself intelligible, he should hold his peace. Language has but one function, and that is to help another to understand what passes in the speaker's breast. What though he is surrounded with the Incomprehensible ? Is he, therefore, authorized to speak in an unknown tongue ? Amid the vague and the obscure, are there not facts, principles, realities of unutterable moment on which he and others may lay hold ? Even when he catches broken glimpses, he can report these simply and faithfully, so as to be apprehended by a prepared mind. The more difficult the subject, the more anxiously the art of clear expression should be cultivated ; and the pulpit, which gathers together the multitude, and addresses its rapid instruction to the ear, demands such culture above all other spheres. This is the last place for dark sayings ; and yet he, who carefully studies expression, will find the pulpit a place for communicating a great amount of profound and soul-stirring thought to the world.

I have said you must preach plainly. I now add, preach with zeal, fervor, earnestness. To rouse, to quicken, is the end of all preaching, and plainness which does not minister to this is of little worth. This topic is too familiar to need expansion ; and I introduce it simply to guard you against construing it too narrowly. The minister is often exhorted to be earnest in the pulpit. You will be told, that fervor in delivering your discourse is the great means of impression. I would rather exhort you to be fervent in preparing it.

Write with earnestness, and you will find little difficulty in preaching earnestly; and if you have not poured out your soul in writing, vehemence of delivery will be of little avail. To enunciate with voice of thunder and vehement gesture a cold discourse, is to make it colder still. The fire which is to burn in the pulpit, must be kindled in the study. Preach with zeal. But let it be a kindly zeal. Always speak in love. Let not earnestness be a cover for anger, or for a spirit of menace and dictation. Always speak as a brother. With the boldest, sternest, most scornful, most indignant reproofs of baseness and crime, let the spirit of humanity, of sorrowful concern be blended. In too much of the zeal of the pulpit, there is a hardness, unfeelingness, inhumanity more intolerable to a good mind, than sleepy dulness, or icy indifference.

I have said preach plainly, and preach earnestly; I now say preach with moral courage. Fear no man, high or low, rich or poor, taught or untaught. Honor all men; love all men; but fear none. Speak what you account great truths frankly, strongly, boldly. Do not spoil them of life to avoid offence. Do not seek to propitiate passion and prejudice by compromise and concession. Beware of the sophistry, which reconciles the conscience to the suppression or vague, lifeless utterance of unpopular truth. Do not wink at wrong deeds or unholy prejudices, because sheltered by custom or respected names. Let your words breathe an heroic valor. You are bound indeed to listen candidly and respectfully to whatever objections may be urged against your views of truth and duty. You must also take heed lest you baptize your rash, crude notions, your hereditary or sectarian opinions with the name of Christian doctrine. But having deliberately, conscientiously sought the truth, abide by your conviction at all hazards. Never shrink from speaking your mind through dread of reproach. Wait not to be backed by numbers. Wait not till you are sure of an echo

from a crowd. The fewer the voices on the side of truth, the more distinct and strong must be your own. Put faith in truth as mightier than error, prejudice, or passion, and be ready to take a place among its martyrs. Feel that truth is not a local, temporary influence, but immutable, everlasting, the same in all worlds, one with God and armed with his omnipotence. Courage even on the side of error is power. How powerful must it prove on the side of truth ! A minister speaking not from selfish calculation, but giving out his mind in godly sincerity, uttering his convictions in natural tones, and always faithful to the light which he has received, however he may give occasional offence, will not speak in vain ; he will have an ally in the moral sense, the principle of justice, the reverence for virtue, which is never wholly extinguished in the human soul.

You are peculiarly called to cherish moral courage, because it is not the virtue of our times and country, and because ministers are especially tempted to moral weakness. The protestant minister, mixing freely with society, sustaining all its relations and depending on opinion for bread, has strong inducements to make a compromise with the world. Is there not reason to fear, that under these influences, religion and the world often shake hands ? Is there not a secret understanding, that the ministry, while it condemns sin in the mass, must touch gently the prejudices, wrongs and abuses which the community has taken under its wing ? Is not preaching often disarmed by this silent, almost unconscious, concession to the world ? Whether a ministry sustained as it now is, can be morally free, is a problem yet to be solved. If not, the minister must now, as of old, leave all for Christ, looking solely for aid to those, however few or poor, who share his own deep interest in the Christian cause. Better earn your bread with the sweat of your brow, than part with moral freedom.

It is natural that you should desire to win the affection

of your people; but beware, lest this interfere with moral courage. There is always danger to dignity and force of character in aiming to win the hearts of others. Dear as affection is, we must be able to renounce it, to live without sympathy, to forfeit this man's confidence and that man's friendship by speaking truth. I exhort you to prize respect more than affection. Respect, gradually won by faithfulness to principle, is more unwavering than personal attachment, and secures more intelligent attention to preaching. We are indeed told, that truth is never so effectual as from the lips of him whom we love. But it is to be desired, that truth should be received for its own sake, that it should have its root in the hearer's reason and conscience, and not in the partiality of friendship. I wish for you the love of this congregation; but still more that they may reverence you as ever ready to sacrifice human love and honor to principle and truth.

Hitherto I have guarded you against selfish fear. There is a more refined fear, to which ingenuous minds are liable. I refer to the apprehension, which springs from a consciousness of inferiority and inability. This often disheartens the minister, subdues his voice, tames his countenance, dims the eye, throws an air of constraint over his form and motions, locks up his soul, suffering no sensibility to gush out, no quickening communication to be established between his own and other souls. To defend yourself from this fear, impress yourself deeply with the divine original and the infinite dignity of the religion you are to preach. You will indeed often stand before your superiors in age and acquisitions. But do not fear. Remember that you are preaching a religion, in the presence of which all human wisdom ought to be humble, and that you are teaching a virtue, which ought to strike a conviction of deep deficiency into the most improved, and by which the most gifted and powerful are soon to be judged. In the contemplation of the ma-

jesty of Christian truth, of the work which it is appointed to accomplish, and of the omnipotence by which it is sustained, you should forget yourself; you should forget the world's ephemeral dignities, and speak with the native unaffected authority of a witness to immortal verities, of a messenger of the Most High.

I am aware, that what has been said to encourage a spirit of fearlessness and independence is liable to abuse. There are those, who confound moral courage with defiance of established opinion, and Christian independence with an overweening fondness for their own conceits. I trust to your humility and soundness of mind for a sober construction of my counsels. I trust you will feel such a respect for past times and for the maxims and institutions of the society to which you belong, as will induce you to weigh cautiously and with self-distrust whatever peculiar views spring up in your mind. You are too wise to bolt from the beaten path, in order to prove that you do not tamely follow other's steps; too wise to be lawless, that you may escape the reproach of servility. The authority of usage is a wholesome restraint on the freaks, follies, and rash experiments of youth and inexperience. But usage must not restrain the intellect and heart. Whilst deferring to the rules which society has settled, you must still act from your own convictions. You must stand out as an individual, and not be melted in the common mass. Whilst you honor antiquity, you must remember that the past has not done and could not do the work of the present; that in religion as in all things, progress is the law and happiness of the race; that our own time has its task, and has wants which the provisions of earlier times cannot satisfy. Remember too, that each man has his own way of working and can work powerfully in no other, and do not anxiously and timidly model yourself after those whom you admire. To escape the sin of presumption, do not be mechanical. To escape

eccentricity, do not shut your eyes on what is peculiar in your lot and fear to meet it by peculiar efforts. The minister too often speaks feebly, because his voice is only the echo of echoes, because he dares not trust to the inspirations of his own soul. To conclude this head—be humble, be modest, but be not weak. Fear God and not man. Respect your deliberately consulted conscience. This energy of spirit will give a greater power to your ministry than all the calculations of selfish prudence or all the compromises of selfish fear.

My brother, one exhortation more. Feel the greatness of your office. Let not its humble exterior, or the opinion of the world, or its frequent inefficacy, hide from you its unspeakable dignity. Regard it as the highest human vocation, as greater than thrones, or any other distinctions which relate merely to the present life. The noblest work on earth, or in heaven, is to act on the soul; to inspire it with wisdom and magnanimity, with reverence for God, and love towards man. This is the highest function of sages and inspired poets, and also of statesmen worthy of the name, who comprehend that a nation's greatness is to be laid in its soul. Glory in your office. Feel that it associates you with the elect of past ages, with Jesus Christ, and apostles, and confessors, and martyrs, and reformers; with all who have toiled and suffered to raise men to intelligence and moral greatness; and let the consciousness of this spiritual brotherhood fortify you for like suffering and toil. Glory in your office. You delight in poetry and the fine arts; but remember that the divinest art is that, which studies and creates the beauty, not of outward form, but of immortal virtue; which creates not statues and pictures, but holy and disinterested men; which awakens the godlike in the breast of our brother. No poem is so glorious as a Christian life; and he, who incites a fellow creature to this, produces a work which will outlast all other works of the

mind. Glory in your office especially, as instituted to carry forward the human soul to wider and higher action, than it has yet attained. Other men are laboring with instruments, the power of which can be measured; but who can measure the energy which resides in Christian truth, or the spiritual life and elevation which this truth, rightly administered, may communicate. Regard your office as meant, not to perpetuate what exists, but to introduce a higher condition of the church and the world. Christ was eminently the Reformer; and Reform is the spirit of the ministry. Without this spirit, our churches are painted sepulchres, and the preaching in them but sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Comprehend the greatness of your spiritual function. You are entrusted with a truth, that is to create a new heaven and a new earth, to prostrate the abuses and corruptions of ages, to unite men by new ties to God, and to one another, to revive the Divine Image in the human soul. Keep your mind in harmony with this great end. Let not pleasures, cares, honors, common example, or opinion, or any worldly interest, sever you from it. Cherish a living faith in a higher operation of Christianity, than is yet seen in any community or any Church. This faith is far from being universal, and for want of it the ministry is weak. But is there no ground for it? Is it an illusion? I know not a weightier question for a minister to answer. Other points of controversy will solicit your attention. But the greatest question which you have to determine is, Whether Christianity has done its work and spent its force, or whether a more regenerating manifestation of truth is not to be hoped? Whether a new application of the Christian law to private and public life is not to be longed for, and prayed for, and confidently expected? Whether Christendom is not to wear another aspect? whether the idea of perfection, of disinterested virtue, which shone forth in the character of Jesus, is not to possess more livingly the human soul, and to be more and more realized

in human life? Your answer to this question will decide very much, whether your ministry shall be a mechanical round, a name, a sleep, or be fraught with life and power. In answering it, do not consult with flesh and blood; but listen to the prophetic words of Jesus Christ; listen to the aspirations of your own soul; listen to that deep discontent with the present forms of Christianity, which is spreading in the community, which breaks out in murmurs now of scorn, now of grief, and which hungers and thirsts for a new coming of the kingdom of God.

My Brother, much might be added, but I hasten to the close of this unusually protracted service. We wish you prosperity. May you establish yourself in the hearts of this people. May you find a lasting home in this beautiful part of our land. Here may you live in peace, here grow old in honor, here close your eyes amid the tears of a grateful people. This we hope; and we have ground of hope in the spirit of the congregation to which you are to minister. But we cannot speak of your prospects as sure. You live in a trying day. The spirit of change which characterizes our times, has penetrated the Church, and shaken the old stability of the ministry. In no profession are men exposed to greater changes than in ours. Prepare yourself for the worst, while you hope for the best. Cherish as among the first virtues of your office, a firm, manly, self-denying spirit. Let not the comforts of life grow into your soul. Be simple in your habits, in food, raiment, pleasures. Be frugal, that you may be just, may "have to give to him that needeth," and may be fitted to sustain privations with dignity. Build up in yourself an energy of purpose, an iron strength of principle, a loftiness of sentiment, which will disarm outward changes, and give power to your ministry, whether in a prosperous or adverse lot. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "Be thou faithful unto death, and He shall give thee a crown of life."

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY

REV. SAMUEL OSGOOD.

The Word has been preached, the Prayer raised, the Charge given, and now, my brother, you turn to me to receive the last of the services of this occasion, that is addressed particularly to yourself. Modestly, as after a father has spoken, one who has surely been a father to you in spiritual things, confidently and affectionately, as speaking to a brother, I give you this Hand of Fellowship, and welcome you to our union. Take this hand, so often given you in the heartiness of friendship, take it now, my brother, in the solemnity of this hour, in token of our congratulation, our sympathy, our coöperation with you in the ministry of the gospel. No crosier, crown, nor mitre, the symbol of your connection with the Church and her ministers, is this fraternal hand. Simple and beautiful emblem of that brotherly love, which is alike the ornament and power of the disciple of Christ! "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another."

Welcome to the labors, trials, joys of the Christian ministry!

Your work will be a work of toil. But why mourn because of that? Let us rather rejoice in our lot of labor. Let us rejoice, that the curse inflicted upon earthly toil is

removed by the Christian spirit, and converted into a blessing. You are called to the ministry of the sons of adoption, and working in the spirit of adoption, you mourn over no slavish task work, but rather delight, that the Eternal Father has give you a free field of labor in the vineyard of his love, and promised an eternal reward.

Your lot will be not devoid of trial. But why mourn because of that? Let the past teach confidence; and can we not both own from personal experience, that God's best gifts to us have come in form of trials? In the congratulations of to-day, I will not forget the darker hours of the soul, and the hard struggle with evil, outward and inward. Still I will not forbear congratulation, for what better cause of congratulation, than upon the right use of affliction. Darkly buried in the earth, the roots of the tree must lie; but it is in order, that trunk and branches may shoot forth high and broad, that the sun and air and rain may bless it, that it may bear goodly fruit, that its boughs may be rich with leaves of healing and its shades vocal with harmony.

Welcome then to the labors and trials of the ministry. Rightly regarding these, you will find them not opposed to the privileges of your profession. I know not, my brother, where to begin, or how to end, in speaking to you of the joys of the Christian ministry. Time would fail me to greet you to the pleasures of the pastoral office — of associating with this people, not for worldly aims, nor in selfish purpose, but as a friend and brother of all; to the pleasures of the Christian scholar, to whom the whole realm of thought — nature, art, history, poetry, philosophy, furnish lessons and illustrations of the truths given him to declare, and to whom the Word of God in the Gospel is revealed as a glorious consummation of the Word in the soul; to the pleasures of this pulpit, whence you are to speak upon the noblest of all themes with the boldness of a man, and the reverence of a child of the Eternal; to the privileges of

administering the ordinances of our faith; of standing at this baptismal font, touching emblem of the truth in its purifying power; at this table of communion, soon to be spread with the bread and wine — pathetic and significant emblems of the Savior's dying love, alike the symbols and the channels of the nurturing and life-giving power of his truth. Time would fail me to treat of these themes, and I may speak of them all in a single one, while I greet your entrance upon the ministry of our common *faith*.

I rejoice with you in the faith, that brings us to this altar of God. That faith to us is more than a name, more than an empty profession. It has been purchased by hard struggles. It is no bequest passively received from education. It is the fruit of much thought and much experience. Our way to the altar of God has been no primrose path. The time has never been when the light of faith has ceased to shine upon us, yet that light has sometimes been dimmed by clouds. Let us rejoice, that the clouds are passed, that the Sun of Righteousness now shines upon us with light undimmed and warmth unchilled. Let us rejoice, that after all our troubled experiences, we now bow at this altar of God, as ministers of the gospel of his Son.

The present hour, my brother, is no rebuke upon our past intercourse, but rather a consummation. As I stand by you upon this sacred occasion, and greet you as a brother in the ministry, I take great pleasure in looking back upon our past intimacy, and upon the subjects, upon which we have most fondly dwelt. Long before we had determined fully upon our profession, the truths, which our present profession urges upon us, were our most cherished themes of thought and discussion. In meditation, reading, conversation, we always dwelt most upon the spiritual nature of man, his connections with God and the eternal life. At winter fireside and summer walk, many have been our conversations upon the truths, of which you this day become

a minister. It is happy for us to perceive, as we look back, what progress has been made, and how far we have transcended many of the doubts and errors of youth. Yet much as we rejoice in our progress, let us not so shame our earlier days as to deny to them a truth-seeking spirit, and many happy glimmerings of principles, that have since opened upon us in the clearness of reason, and with the warmth of maturer hearts. Here, my brother, let us not be ashamed of the dreams of our youth.

Standing with you at this time in presence of this assembly, I cannot but recur to the occasion when last we stood together before a public audience. Eight years since, when graduating from our mother university, by the request of our classmates, we gave them the parting word, and bade them God speed upon the journey of life. That was a happy day to us. How shall we look back upon it from the present hour, — with pain or with pleasure? The future was before us, and with much enthusiasm and confidence we awaited the withdrawal of that curtain, which was to reveal to us our lot in the world. The curtain has been withdrawn, our lot has been revealed. Here we stand, my brother, again side by side, at a Christian altar, not indeed as youthful students, but as fellow-ministers of the gospel. Can we not say that we are happy? Can we not say that time has brought to us more blessings, than he has taken away? His scythe may indeed have cut down some fair flowers that bloomed in the gardens of our youth; but the best have been spared; the amaranths, unfading, have grown in strength and beauty; faith and hope and love have gained new brightness. Here we stand side by side, as of old, and before us, some of the cherished band for whom we then said the farewell to their academic home. If the lapse of time has taught us more practical prudence, it has not chilled our enthusiasm; if it has imparted humility, it has not destroyed our confidence; if it has given

us more serenity, it has not tamed our ardor. No, my brother, we will not mourn at the flight of years, and the changes of our lot. Hand in hand, as when we of old parted, let me with equal fervor greet you with the wish, then given by one of us to our parting companions: "May all go well with you; may life have no clouds, that the sunlight will not gild; no storms that the bow of promise will not brighten; and may the Veiled One of heaven bring us at last to meet, where clouds and storms shall be no more." My brother, farewell!

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE,

BY

REV. EDWARD B. HALL.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS OF THIS SOCIETY,

He whom you have chosen, is now yours. He is your Minister, ordained to serve you. And the single exhortation which I will ask you to receive, after all you have heard and felt, is, that you will suffer him to serve you. How?

First, by taking high and large views yourselves of the service to which he comes. And next, by feeling that you are called to the same service, as co-workers.

Let your views of this service be high and large. It is the service of God, appointed by him, in the nature he gives, the relations he institutes, the trials he sends, the destiny he reveals. It is the service of Christ, and, in him, the service of truth, love, and immortality; truth, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; love, free, forgiving, all-comprehending, deathless; immortality, stamped upon the soul, craved by all, sealed and glorified by him who is the resurrection and the life. It is the service of man — man, the neighbor, the foreigner, the friend and enemy, the sufferer, the sinner; him most, who can best be served, and

to whom it is most clearly due ; him next, and all every where, whom prayer, truth, example, and blessing, can reach : and whom can they not ? It is the service of perfect freedom, allowed neither to impose nor to bear fetters, to consent to no bondage in the soul, or the world ; to own but one master, to fear only lest it be faithless, to hope and strive, humbly, gently, yet manfully, and to the end, for that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

Such is the service, to which our brother this day devotes himself. Can he come to it, if he be but a man, with other feelings than trembling solicitude, and yet trusting and soaring aspiration ? Would you ask him to approach it with any narrow or servile views ? Assure him not, by taking yourselves the noblest views of that which is the noblest work on earth, and connects earth with heaven.

I need not specify the ways, in which this conviction is to be carried out, and to operate. Let it be true, and it will find its own ways. It will go forth to him who is to serve, wherever he stand, in the pulpit, in the family, by the way side, amid scenes of joy and of sorrow, in the throng of life, at the bed of death, hailing him as the friend and sharer, the counsellor and comforter, seeking not yours but you, pleading and working for the spiritual and the enduring. And so will it give to the word he utters free course, in waiting minds and willing hearts, a spirit of freedom, a demand never unreasonable, unsuspecting confidence, the consciousness of need, the power of faith and love, an ever sympathizing and coöperating effort.

This next — coöperation. If you would help your minister to be a minister, and truly to serve you, serve him. Serve with him. The principle of correlative duty is recognised, to some extent, in all the relations of life. But the principle of equal duty and equal obligation, is not recognised. At least not in the relation of Pastor and People. Yet it exists. Equal duty and obligation. By what is

duty determined in any relation, by what is obligation ever to be measured and fixed, except by capacity — the power of knowing, acting, serving? The principle, then, is one. And it is as simple as it is single; so simple, so inherent, and self-evident, that I always feel as if to urge or explain it, were dealing in truisms, and therefore I will not use a moment to point out or prove its applications. There is a brief saying of the prophet, which is better than many words. "There shall be like people, like priest." Understand this to refer to the reciprocal influences of character, or to corresponding duties, and similar obligations, it is equally true. And a truth to which all would do well to give heed. For the relation of pastor and people is not a narrow relation, not isolated, not religious alone in any restricted or professional sense. It is connected with all relations. It bears upon all duties. The view that men take of it, if it does not affect, is affected by all their views of life and duty, power and destiny. As the minister who assumes the office for any narrow or selfish end, cannot fulfil its design, so the people, who regard it as a mere institution or custom, a state policy, an outward decency, or a charitable scheme for the support of a certain class of laborers, can never give it the coöperation it asks and needs. If any thing could quench the light of the soul, and shake that faith which is built upon a rock, it would be the cold civility, the formal deference and respectful distance, with which so many affect to uphold or to patronise the christian ministry; the ministry of love and reconciliation, of truth and immortal life. O, my friends, give to this ministry, whatever else you give, or are compelled to withhold, give it those hearts on which it is to do its work; uphold, enlarge, fulfil its purpose, by that sympathy of faith and life of coöperation, which will make you to be laborers together with God, and with his servant.

We are all prone to overrate the peculiarity of the crisis

at which we live. But allowing for this, I suppose it may safely be said, that the ministry, as an institution, is passing now a severe trial, from the very freedom and independence in which we rejoice, and the diversity, if not conflict, of combination and aim, every where prevalent. This trial must go on. How much its complexion and issue depend upon the people, need not be said. The clergy may affect it, for good or evil. The laity control it. It is in their hands. And if the love of man and of God be not in their hearts, if they are not swayed by the love of truth for its own sake, and by faith in it, Christianity may experience among us another temporary eclipse, such as it has more than once endured in the history of nations. I do not fear it, if it come. I do not believe it will come. But I see little of that sense of deep individual responsibility, which the trial itself should create. There seems rather an increasing recklessness as to cause and consequence. Young men are fewer, and more faint of heart to bear up the ark of the Lord. Parents are more backward to prompt, nay, they are far more ready to prevent, their sons from putting on the armor of Christ's ambassadors. The whole community is inclined to exaggerate those difficulties, and retreat from those calls for endurance, which ought the more to kindle young and old with high resolve and generous devotion to the cause of truth and love. Is our vocation thronged with more and more of trouble, and vicissitude, and uncertainty? So are all vocations. And if they were not, they should be last to grow weary or be forsaken. A coward spirit, that quails before difficulty and self-sacrifice, in such a work! Is any man ashamed of the gospel of Christ? To the people as well as the pastor, to the parent, and student, and worshipper, and helper, does the Gospel look for an answer. What shall yours be?

Clear is it, beyond question, that the elements most needed by the mind and the world, in all crises, real or imagi-

nary, for all institutions and relations, are these three — Faith, Hope, Charity — and the greatest of these, still and forever the greatest, Charity — the large, free, all-encircling, all-enduring, omnipotent principle of Love, creating spiritual fellowship, a human and divine brotherhood. Let it pervade this relation which you now form, and it will lift it above all that is partial, extend it beyond the local, and merge every thing temporary and sectional, slavish or sensual, in the great law of Christian equality, and the sublime work of Christian perfection. Be one with Jesus, and with God, even as they are one. Be perfect.

On no occasion, my friends, can I regard you without the emotion, on this occasion I cannot address you without the expression, of personal interest. The past authorizes, the present compels it. This month, the passing week, completes fifteen years, since we together, with feeble hands, but trusting hearts, laid and consecrated the corner-stone of this temple. What changes has that period witnessed, in your public and private sanctuaries! On these I may not dwell. Suffer me only to ask, if in any of these changes your faith has failed; and if it has, was it through its own fault? Has it not proved strong and sufficient, in proportion as you have leaned upon it? So will it prove in the changes to come, as come they will. Be ready. Be firm and fearless. Quit you like men. Be true to yourselves. Be true to your minister. I can assure him of your kindness. I can assure you of his wish to serve you. That wish is never feeble on a day like this. If the heart of the people swell with hope and rise in prayer, what are the aspirations and anxieties of the Pastor? Let heart answer to heart. And out of their abundance, now and always, let there be full utterance. Suppress not your sympathy. Disown not your nature in any of its cravings. Keep not silence until forced to speak. Withhold not your presence, your attendance here, your prayers at home, your coöperation everywhere,

your essential and blessed ministry of faith and works. The times and the truth, your brethren and your race, Christianity, humanity, invoke your aid. Give it with the whole heart and a true life, and God will be with you, and bless you evermore.

